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THE POETRY OF SIDNEY LANIER.

THERE has never been a sufficient investigation of Lanier's importance as a prose writer, and in view of this and the recent publication of the new edition of his works and collection of his magazine essays, there is a great temptation to devote this article to that side of the man. But though it has been often reviewed, there has not yet appeared—with the possible exception of Dr. Callaway's introduction to the "Select Poems"—any adequate appreciation, at once sympathetic and impartial, of Lanier's poetry, and so with the aid of our recent study of his life¹ this will be attempted here, as far as may be in the brief space allotted.

Even for this purpose it is a loss not to have first considered the prose works. They are intimately connected with the man and the poet; they throw much light on the subject-matter of the poems, and, what is more important, on his attitude to poetry itself, while the "Science of English Verse" contains the theory of versification on which most of his poems were consciously written.

It is exactly this scientific side of the man, his broad scientific attainments, that raise the first presumption against his success as a poet, and many believe that in fact it proved a detriment. But Lanier himself forcibly combats this idea. "The trouble with Poe," he writes, "is that he did not know enough," and we have seen how he traced the defects in Schumann and others to a lack of broad knowledge. So he says, in the "English Novel," "You need not dream of winning the attention of sober people with your poetry unless that poetry and your soul behind it are informed and saturated with at least the largest final conceptions of current science." And is he not fundamentally right? Since poetry is, according to the oldest and best definition, distinguished from prose by being more true (*φιλοσοφώτερον*), how can

¹Sewanee Review, July, 1900.

that higher truth be without a thorough knowledge of the lower?

Another prevalent idea is that his essentially musical genius and his "divided devotion between the sister arts" worked a constant injury to his poetry. It is true that it was at times a hindrance, but—as will be shown later—it was an important element in his most successful poems. And it is worth something to have added almost a new land to the territory of poetry, even if later writers are to profit more than its discoverer.

That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it;
That high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.

There is another popular misconception which should be noticed here. It is the idea advanced by various critics that Lanier's earlier pieces, written before he attempted to apply his theories and the slighter poems in which these theories were not used, are the most successful. But the truth seems to be that most of the faults of the poems are due to peculiarities of style traceable in the prose writings, and not at all connected with his musical theories; while in his poetry, as in his prose, there is a marked improvement both in the style and thought. There is in his earliest translation (1864) a phrase "silent in a most sad calm" as bad as any due to a striving for musical effects. In "Wilhelmina" there are unnecessary compounds and some harsh words, unusual Saxon words in "Barnacles," and an unbridled imagination in "June Dreams in January." Moreover, in comparing "Song for Jacquerie," the one beginning "May the Maiden," "Evening Song," "Marsh Song," and "Marsh Song at Sunset," or "The Waving of the Corn," "The Dove," "The Bee," we find a steady improvement, as also in a comparison of "Corn" with "Sunrise."

The peculiarities of Lanier's style with reference to its vocabulary and phrasings are due to two idiosyncrasies—his love for early English words and turns of expression, and his love for music. Under each there are instances of harsh or

infelicitous use, and others, perhaps more in number, where the effect is most successful. A constantly recurring peculiarity is his use of "fain," for which he seems to have a great love; and though reason says that it is good Anglo-Saxon and justified, at least in poetry, its unnaturalness always causes a shock. Another frequently recurring expression which Lanier claimed as a right is "for to." Other such unfortunate expressions due to the early English influence are "wafture," "dole"—which in some places is excellent—"tilth," "maw," "conventicle;" while "gospelling gloom," "yon trim Shakspeare," and many others that cannot be properly judged away from their context go to the other side of the account. To music are due "mulched and unsavory with death," "purfling," "dreams-a-dream," "made song," and many other strained phrases, which his tendency toward undue condensation increased; but there are also "lull sings a little brook," "the rattling bucket plumps souse down the well," "humped and fishy sea," "huge and muddling sea," and others equally as good.

To both these peculiarities is due Lanier's fondness for compounds, a tendency he shares with several modern poets, but carries farther than any. There are more than seventy compounds in the "Symphony" alone. In many cases these are only a matter of spelling, the sense being just the same if a hyphen is not used, as in "sky-slope," "heart-beats," "true-love," though the hyphen adds a touch of poetry; some, as "no-tongued," "all-shaped," "lotos-sleeps," are harsh; while many are beautiful, as "Long chords change-marked with sobbing," "And made a great chord tranquil-surfaced so," "Broad-fronted ferns and keen-leaved canes," "Servant all love-eloquent," "Blind to lips kiss-wise set," "How piteous-false the poor decree."

But it is again idle to quote more. Perhaps a defect may be correctly gauged away from its context, but it is certain that no beauty is the same thus torn away.

Other characteristics of Lanier's style are frequently long and sometimes involved sentences and a tendency to over-condensation, of both of which the poem "To Bayard Taylor"

furnishes an extreme instance; another is the oft-recurring use of overstrained figures. But once more, if it is in many places a defect, it is also a cause of many beauties. There are few things in any poetry more beautiful, for instance, than the figures in the "Marshes of Glynn."

A recent critic has summed up all Lanier's work by the word over-italicized. This is indeed true, but it is not all the truth. All of his work is highly colored, but we have found from the letters that he recognized this as a fault and strove to correct it. Though he did not entirely succeed, in his later and simpler pieces, he may be said to have fairly attained the white light, and in the descriptive poems a harmonious coloring.

Though the poetry of Lanier is contained in some two hundred pages, there is considerable variety both in theme and character, a range going all the way from the dialect poems to the "Hymns of the Marshes."

In the dialect pieces there is a constant play of humor and much shrewd and homely wisdom. The dialect, so far as it is possible to represent it in spelling, is perfectly accurate. But it does not get over the inherent unreality of such writing—from its very form and a thought not always in accordance with its dress—and is not equal to the best work in that class, as may be easily seen by a comparison with the "Biglow Papers." "Thar's more in the man than thar is in the land," is perhaps the best; "Jones's Private Argymment" has a present day interest, as it explains why a year of a short cotton crop and higher prices is invariably followed by one of a large crop; and the "Power of Prayer" is interesting compared with the similar story told in Mark Twain's "Gilded Age," from which it probably originated through the medium of a ten-line newspaper paragraph, outlining the incident without referring to its source.

Turning to the shorter lyrics, we find many beautiful: "Between Dawn and Sunrise," "Rose Morals, Red" (the "White" is not pleasing), "To —— with a Rose," "A Song of the Future," "A Song of Love," "The Stirrup Cup," "The Dove," "Evening Song," and the "Marsh Song at Sunset."

As the first is new, appearing only in the last edition of the "Poems," it may be given here:

BETWEEN DAWN AND SUNRISE.

Were silver pink, and had a soul,
Which soul were shy, which shyness might
A visible influence be, and roll
Through heaven and earth—'twere thou, O light!

O rhapsody of the wraith of red,
O blush but yet in prophecy,
O sun-hint that hath overspread
Sky, marsh, my soul, and yonder sail.

These poems illustrate the best results from Lanier's musical ideas. Simple and moving, they show variable meter, alliteration, syzygy, adaptation of the sound to the sense, and are musical to the last degree. Only one of these short songs is faulty, "Special Pleading," which is full of strained and unusual expressions.

In a little higher key are "A Song of Eternity in Time," and "A Ballad of Trees and the Master." The latter as being the most pathetic—it is much more than that—of all the lyrics, and very short, may be quoted:

Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent.
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him,
The little gray leaves were kind to Him;
The thorn-tree had a mind to Him
When into the woods He came.

Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content.
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When Death and Shame would woo Him last,
From under the trees they drew Him last;
'Twas on a tree they slew Him—last
When out of the woods He came.

If this little poem is thought beautiful at first reading, a study of it increases this feeling of beauty. Perfectly simple, with no unusual word used, except "forspent," the lines are

exquisitely musical. Next, one notices the peculiar felicity of the expressions. Repeated readings increase the sense of beauty and produce an effect comparable only to that of a picture of the scene by a master hand.

Another group may be made of poems somewhat longer written on a special occasion or to point a moral. Of these "To Bayard Taylor," which has already been mentioned, is so condensed as to defy understanding at the first reading and is open to severe criticism, but a second perusal will reveal some noble thoughts; "To Beethoven" is also condensed and is not wholly successful; while "To Richard Wagner," "At First," "To Charlotte Cushman," "The Bee," "Tampa Robins," and "A Florida Sunday" are excellent. In the last, as in "Remonstrance," and in "How Love Looked for Hell"—where the thought, that no hell can be where love is, is admirably worked out—there is given most of Lanier's religion and some of his main points in his message to the age.

To this group belongs "The Crystal," where much of the criticism is good, and that of Shakespeare and Homer characteristic of the man, who wished that men might be "maids in purity." It should, however, be remembered that the plan of the poem requires a special reference to the faults and not the merits of each writer. The last part is especially good:

Yea, all you hearts,
 Of beauty, and sweet righteous lovers large;
 Aurelius fine, oft superfine; mild saint
 À Kempis, over mild; Epictetus,
 While low in thought, still with old slavery tinct;
 Rapt Behmen, rapt too far; high Swedenborg,
 O'ertoppling; Langley, that with but a touch
 Of art hadst sung Piers Plowman to the top
 Of English songs, whereof 'tis dearest, now,
 And most adorable; Cædmon, in the morn
 A-calling angels with the cowherd's call
 That late brought up the cattle; Emerson
 Most wise, that yet, in finding Wisdom, lost
 Thy Self, sometimes; tense Keats, with angels' nerves
 Where men's were better; Tennyson, largest voice
 Since Milton, yet some register of wit
 Wanting; All, all, I pardon, ere 'tis asked,
 Your more or less, your little mole that marks
 You brother and your kinship seals to man.

But thee, but Thee, O sovereign Seer of time,
But Thee, O poet's Poet, Wisdom's Tongue,
But Thee, O man's best Man, O love's best Love,
O perfect life in perfect labor writ,
O all men's comrade, Servant, King, or Priest
What *if* or *yet*, what more, what flaw, what lapse,
What least defect or shadow of defect,
What rumor, tattled by an enemy,
Of inference loose, what lack of grace,
Even in torture's grasp, or sleep's or death's—
O, what amiss may I forgive in Thee,
Jesus, good Paragon, thou Crystal Christ?

Like many other poets, Lanier used the sonnet to express his most intimate feelings; though there is no large collection on any one theme. Most of them are in the English or Shakespearean form, which is never so pleasing if only because of the comparison it invokes. But it must be acknowledged that he is successful as a sonneteer, and one cannot but wish that he had written more.

The one which has been most quoted, "The Mocking Bird," is to the present writer among the least attractive. All its beauties do not atone for the lines

. . . Bounced airily along
The Sward, pitched in a grasshopper, made song
Mid flight.

The sonnet in German, "An Frau Nannette Falk-Auerbach," is rather pleasing, more so than in its English form; that to Charlotte Cushman is also good. Of the sonnets to his wife, those in the second group, "Acknowledgment," are the better, though one in the first, "In Absence," beginning

Let no man say, "He at his lady's feet,"

is nearly as good. The ending in "Laus Mariæ,"

O sweet, my pretty sum of history,
I leapt the breadth of Time in loving thee!

is wonderful; but the best of these sonnets, and one almost if not quite perfect, is the third in "Acknowledgment:"

If I do ask, How God can dumbness keep
While Sin creeps grinning through His house of Time,
Stabbing his saintliest children in their sleep,
And staining holy walls with clots of crime?

Or, How may He whose wish but names a fact
 Refuse what miser's-scanting of supply
 Would richly glut each void where man hath lacked
 Of grace or bread?—or, How may Power deny
 Wholeness to th' almost folk that hurt our hope—
 These heart-break Hamlets who so barely fail
 In life or art that but a hair's more scope
 Had set them fair on heights they ne'er may scale?
 Somehow by thee, dear Love, I win content;
 Thy Perfect stops the Imperfect's argument.

Another sonnet which seems to have been overlooked by the critics is worth giving because it is Petrarchian in form, and almost Elizabethan in its tone and manner:

THE HARLEQUIN OF DREAMS.

Swift, through some trap mine eyes have never found,
 Dim-paneled in the painted scene of sleep,
 Thou, giant Harlequin of Dreams, dost leap
 Upon my spirit's stage. Then Sight and Sound,
 Then Space and Time, then Language, Mete and Bound,
 And all familiar Forms that firmly keep
 Man's reason in the road, change faces, peep
 Betwixt the legs and mock the daily round.
 Yet thou canst more than mock; sometimes my tears
 At midnight break through bounden lids—a sign
 Thou hast a heart; and oft thy little leaven
 Of dream-taught wisdom works me bettered years.
 In one night witch, saint, trickster, fool divine,
 I think thou'rt Jester at the Court of Heaven!

It is interesting to compare this with the sonnets on "Sleep" given by Lanier in "A Forgotten English Poet," by Bartholomew Griffin, Daniel, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and Sidney. It is enough to say that it stands the comparison.

In another species of poetry, the "Ballad," Lanier has made only one attempt and that a notable success—the "Revenge of Hamish." It is a versification of a story in William Black's strange novel, "MacLeod of Dare," and once more there is an opportunity to compare the effect of poetry and prose. The difference is truly wonderful. The poem has been highly praised, but not too highly. Nothing could be better than its conclusion, which very properly, since the ballad tells a tragedy, serves as a purgation of the feelings of pity and ter-

ror that it arouses. It should be read in connection with the whole to get the effect.

And gazed hungrily o'er, and the blood from his back drip-dripped in the
brine,

And a sea-hawk flung down a skeleton fish as he flew,
And the mother stared white on the waste of blue,
And the wind drove a cloud to seaward, and the sun began to shine.

This is even finer than the somewhat similar ending of Schiller's "Der Taucher," which has been so much admired.

Wohl hört man die Brandung, wohl kehrt sie zurück,
Sie verkündigt der donnernde Schall;
Da buckt sich's hinunter mit liebendem Blick,
Es kommen, es kommen die Wasser all,
Sie rauschen herauf, sie rauschen nieder,
Den Jüngling bringt keines wieder.

The effect of the two endings is exactly the same; but if anything, that of Lanier's is the finer. There are other points of resemblance between the poem, their departure from the ordinary ballad meter and line arrangement; though retaining its effect and the genuine ballad spirit; the apparent simplicity with which the story is told in a succession of bold strokes where every line tells; and the steady progress to a tragic climax. It would be high praise to say "The Revenge of Hamish" is a better ballad, but one is almost tempted to go so far. And it would be difficult to find another ballad in English of which as much might be said.

This is one of the pieces that Stedman says succeeds because Lanier has not applied his musical ideas. But Lanier calls it "An Experiment in Logœdic Dactyls," nor can we find anywhere in his poems a more complete concord of sense and form. There is as much adaptation of the two as in "A Song of the Chattahoochee," though necessarily in a different way. In the one case it goes unobserved toward increasing the general effect; in the other it takes the easily recognized shape of onomatopœia. Of this "A Song of the Chattahoochee" is an excellent specimen, but almost alone of Lanier's poems, the beautiful form is not accompanied by a deeper merit of sense.

Of the longer poems there is none without some fault, but

their merit is exceedingly various. "The Psalm of the West" is the poorest of all. It is the extreme of high coloring and, as Dr. Callaway says, leaves one "bramble-tangled in a brilliant maze." It is too long by half, and it is not easy to see its purport until one arrives at the end.

"Corn," while it contains many good passages, as the one beginning

Yet ever piercest downward in the mold

and the apostrophe to the "Old Hill," is yet, on the whole, not a success. There are some lines of mere recitative, the meaning is often much involved, and it furnishes illustrations of all the above noted faults of style. Though there is, in spite of all, enough beauty of form and depth of meaning to enable one to understand why its publication was taken to show the advent of no ordinary poet, it is a pity that he is still so generally judged by it instead of his later and more successful efforts.

In many things the next poem in date, "The Symphony," is the greatest of all. In its message it is the most significant, and in its form—at least to the musical ear—almost flawless. But criticism goes all the way from calling it "a mass of nebulous recitative"² to a comparison with Tennyson's "Maud,"³ which finds a similarity in the two poems, and almost equal, though different merit. Perhaps it is another instance of the fact that Lanier's poetry appeals most to the musically inclined, and not at all to some people. As to the present writer, the effect of repeated readings has always been that of a real symphony, and it has been impossible to discover the lines of meaningless recitative.

"Clover" is another poem about which there are varying opinions. It would almost seem that it appeals to exactly the taste that condemns the "Symphony." To me it is, next to the "Psalm of the West," the least attractive of all the poems. The central idea, of the clover heads turned poets and time, the Course-of-Things, as an ox, while characteristic of the author, is by no means a successful example of his

² Stedman in "Poets of America."

³ F. F. Browne, editor of the *Dial*, quoted by Callaway.

fondness for unusual personifications. Though there are some excellent lines, as

The incalculable Up-and-Down of time—

The artist's market is the heart of man—

and the conclusion,

The End of Means is art that works by love,

The End of Ends . . . in God's beginnings lost—

they do not redeem the faulty conception of the whole. With the exception of the "Crystal," it is the only finished poem in which Lanier has used blank verse. In both, but especially in the former, he may be said to succeed with that difficult medium, at least in comparison with other modern poets. But along with them he falls far short of the standard set by Shakespeare and Milton.

Something ought also to be said about the "Centennial Cantata." So far from being a typical embodiment of Lanier's musical ideas, it is in contradiction of two he considered fundamental⁴—that music does not have any meaning intelligible to the intellect, and that poetry and music, though interrelated, have distinct spheres. We have seen that it was written under limitations which he clearly recognized. It should not be considered as a poem, but as an example of words to programme music, a libretto to the cantata and a part of it. So taken and tested by the performance of the whole, it has generally been considered a success—which it certainly is not as a poem.

There remain the longer poems in the "Hymns of the Marshes," "Sunrise," and "The Marshes of Glynn." Of the two, perhaps because of the difference in the way they were written, the first is the nearer perfect, but the "Sunrise" is the greater. It would be easy to show their faults, but even these are minimized in the general effect, and any attempt to reveal their merits would fail that did not give the whole poem. In pure description there is nothing finer, and through the

⁴See under "Music and Poetry" and "Science of English Verse," *supra*. But Lanier's application of the first idea was variable and not wholly consistent. We have seen that music was always full of meaning to him, and it is hard to see the distinction as to how it came.

deeper meaning that they find in the simple phenomena of nature they develop a moral teaching, thoroughly artistic because brought out of the scenes themselves and not forced in from outside, that raises them immeasurably above mere description. In "Sunrise" perhaps the best passages are the one beginning

Ye lispers, whisperers, singers in storm,
Ye consciences murmuring faiths under forms, etc.;

and, too, the one beginning with

O what if a sound should be made!

the wonder description of the approach of dawn.

"The Marshes of Glynn" is full of beautiful metaphors, such as

But now when the moon is no more, and riot is rest,
And the sun is a-wait at the ponderous gate of the West,
And the slant yellow beam down the wood-aisle doth seem
Like a lane into heaven that leads from a dream;

And such single lines as

Cells for the passionate pleasure of prayer to the soul that grieves,
And belief overmasters doubt, and I know that I know;

and

As a silver-wrought garment that clings to and follows the firm sweet
limbs of a girl;

but the best part still is the conclusion.

This conclusion is noticeable because the rest of the poem is so highly wrought it would seem difficult to make an adequate ending. But it affords a distinct rise in thought, and leaves us satisfied. Indeed, in almost all Lanier's poems, even the simplest, the arrangement is good, and there is a gradual rise of the thought to a climax, and one that is almost always fitting and adequate.

Perhaps there is no better way to suggest—for it is impossible to describe it—the effect of these poems on the reader, than by a little verse of Geibel which seems especially to apply

Ein gut Gedicht ist wie ein Schöner Traum,
Es zieht dich in sich, und du merkst es kaum; . . .
Du schaust und trinkst im Schau'n Vergessenheit,
Und gleich als hättest du im Schlaf geruht,
Steigst du erfrischt aus seiner Klaren Flut!

One poem has been omitted, about which all opinions seem to unite, one that is simple and nearly or quite perfect, and that alone would almost insure the fame of its author. It thus furnishes a fitting last glimpse of the poems:

MY SPRINGS.

In the heart of the Hills of Life, I know
Two springs that with unbroken flow
Forever pour their lucent streams
Into my soul's far Lake of Dreams.

Not larger than two eyes, they lie
Beneath the many-changing sky
And mirror all of life and time,
Serene and dainty pantomine.

Shot through with lights of stars and dawns,
And shadowed sweet by ferns and fawns,
Thus heaven and earth together vie
Their shining depths to sanctify.

O Love, O Wife, thine eyes are they,
My springs from out whose shining gray
Issue the sweet celestial streams
That feed my life's bright Lake of Dreams.

Oval and large and passion-pure
And gray and wise and honor-sure;
Soft as a dying violet-breath
Yet calmly unafraid of death.

Thronged, like two dovecotes of gray doves,
With wife's and mother's and poor-folk's loves,
And home-loves and high glory-loves
And science-loves and story-loves.

And loves for all that God and man
In art and nature make or plan,
And lady-loves for spidery lace
And broideries and supple grace.

And diamonds and the whole sweet round
Of little things that large life compound,
And loves for God and God's bare truth,
And loves for Magdalen and Ruth.

Dear eyes, dear eyes and rare complete—
 Being heavenly-sweet and earthly-sweet—
 I marvel that God made you mine,
 For when He frowns, 'tis then ye shine!

The judgments as to Lanier's worth as a poet are exceedingly various. Mr. Stedman,⁵ while criticising adversely "Corn" and "The Symphony," praises the shorter pieces, and says that "Sunrise" and "The Marshes of Glynn" go far toward vindicating his method. He thinks that his poetry is weakened by a tendency to didacticism.

Mr. Henry S. Pancoast, in his introduction to "American Literature," writes that Lanier is, "in the opinion of many, the greatest literary genius that the South has yet produced. . . . To him, art was a revelation through a beautiful body of a beautiful soul in the work. . . . There is [in his poetry] an inspiring loftiness of thought, a deep sympathy with the life of nature, and at times a wonderful lyrical and poetic beauty, and an accent of originality, which among our American poets is rare indeed. . . . With all its shortcomings, Lanier's work is a noble and beautiful addition to American poetry, and there is none among our poets whose life is more stainless, more lofty, and more inspiring. He unites the Southern warmth with the Northern intellect. His poetry is more glowing, more passionate, and perhaps even more enduring than that of the New England school."

Mr. Gosse says of Lanier that he is "never simple, never easy, never in one single lyric natural and spontaneous for more than one stanza." On the other hand, an anonymous writer in the London *Spectator*, quoted by Dr. Callaway, thinks Lanier "the most original of all American poets, and more original than any England has produced for the last thirty years;" and Madame Th. Benzou (Madame Blanc, in an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*,⁶ calls Poe and Lanier the Ahriman and Ormuzd of Baltimore, and says that the latter is "essentially a poet in the transcendental sense of that title, no mere artificer in rhymes, but an exceptional being, penetrated with the sense of the sacredness of the beau-

⁵ Supra. ⁶ Littell's *Living Age*, May 14, 21, 1898.

tiful, and capable of realizing the ideal he himself has proclaimed in the piece entitled 'Life and Song.' Lanier does sometimes soar as high as the greatest of American poets, even Whitman. [Is Whitman the greatest?] He is more truly a poet in the absolute sense of seer, magician, a *trouvère*, than some who are considered stars of the first magnitude."

Doubtless these different judgments are due to different ideas about poetry, as to which Lanier's works raise several fundamental questions.

One is the importance of a broad knowledge as a necessary basis; another is as to the value of the musical element in poetry. Both of these have already been considered, and it need only be added as to the latter that it must inevitably depend on the taste of the individual, and as to the former that it is true of poetry, as Lanier so aptly says of the novel, that it is a union of science and imagination, only in it the union must be so complete that it amounts to a transmutation of the lower element.

Another question, whether Lanier's work is not too consciously formal to rank as good poetry, involves the deeper one of the relative merit of conscious and unconscious art, of that which is essentially subjective and that which is objective in effect. Lanier would say that the conscious and successful use of form is necessary for both classes. But while this is in one sense true, there is none the less a well-recognized distinction between the two, and Lanier's poetry belongs entirely to the former. But if there are Shakespeare and Goethe in one class, there are Virgil and Milton in the other, and that the conscious use of even the most difficult form does not preclude the most perfect success in verse, the one case of Lycidas is enough to prove. True it is that a difficult form is the touchstone of a genuine poet, and in some of Lanier's poetry it shows him wanting, but in his highest work he stands the test.

Still another question raised is as to the propriety of a moral purpose in art. For all Lanier's poetry is permeated with moral purpose; and it must be that all who prefer art for art's

sake will find fault. Others, who think with Lanier that all true art is necessarily moral, and do not object to a moral teaching so long as it does not degenerate into a moral, there will be few places to criticise.

It has been seen that Lanier's poetry has beauty of form, and a higher truth based on the lower. It has also a genuine *σπουδαιότης*. More than is usual with modern poets, he was a "seer" with a message and a mission, and he gave his life to its fulfillment. It is this that gives his work a remarkable unity, one that almost atones for his never having written a great poem. Though he never finished his "Jacquerie," it is as if he had embodied its thought in all his poetry. The central idea of it all is the all-importance of Love, a love that abhors trade so far as it is destructive to life, upholds true chivalry as a beautiful embodiment of one's duty to his neighbor, prizes nature and man because both are brothers, and leads through music up to God.

It is not in accordance with our purpose to attempt a decision in regard to Lanier's rank as a poet, even if it were now possible to make one. But some things may yet be said, in conclusion, that throw some light on the decision of the future. As he expresses and typifies all that is best in the highest type of Southern character, a type that is passing as to its external peculiarities, but not as to its essentials, he is sure to be increasingly the poet of the South. If his ideas about the importance of music as the art of the future are correct (and it seems they are), his methods will be more and more used, perhaps more successfully, and his fame increased. Now ranked by many above Poe, he may then be placed above any American poet. One thing is certain: his best poetry is sure of immortality, as is the man himself, for the world is better because he lived and wrote.

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